

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. In a time division multiple access communication  
5 system having a base station and a plurality of user stations, a  
method of communicating between the base station and a user  
station, comprising the steps of:

establishing a series of time frames, each time frame  
comprising a plurality of time slots; and

10 transmitting a plurality of messages from the base  
station to the user station, each of said messages comprising an  
information element indicating a location of a subsequent time  
slot available for communication.

15 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said plurality of  
messages comprise control traffic messages, and wherein said step  
of transmitting a plurality of messages from the base station to  
the user station comprises the step of completing a control  
traffic transaction.

20 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step  
of completing a handshake transaction between said base station  
and said user station so as to establish a communication channel,  
and thereafter exchanging bearer traffic messages between said  
25 user station and said base station over said established  
communication channel.

30 4. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of  
transmitting said plurality of messages comprises the step of  
spread spectrum encoding said messages.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step  
of transmitting a plurality of messages from the user station to

the base station, each of said plurality of messages transmitted in the time slot indicated by the information element of the preceding message from the base station.

5           6. In a communication system comprising at least one base station capable of communicating with a plurality of user stations, a method of communication comprising the steps of:  
transmitting a first message from the base station,  
said first message comprising an information element indicating a  
10 relative time position for a subsequent communication;  
receiving said first message at a user station;  
transmitting, according to said relative time position,  
a second message from said user station to said base station; and  
receiving said second message at said base station.

15           7. The method of claim 6 wherein said step of transmitting said first message comprises the step of spread spectrum encoding said first message, and wherein said step of transmitting said second message comprises the step of spread  
20 spectrum encoding said second message.

25           8. The method of claim 6 wherein  
said base station and said user station communicate  
according to a time division multiple access protocol in which a  
series of time frames are each divided into a plurality of time  
slots, and  
wherein said information element indicates said  
relative time position by reference to a designated one of said  
time slots.

30           9. A message structure for use in a time division multiple access communication system, said time division multiple access communication system operating according to a

communication protocol by which a series of time frames are each divided into a plurality of time slots, said message structure comprising:

a data segment; and

5 a header segment, said header segment comprising a next slot pointer.

10 10. The message structure of claim 9 wherein said next slot pointer identifies a subsequent time slot available for communication.

15 11. The message structure of claim 10, wherein said slot pointer comprises a numerical value indicating a relative number of time slots until said subsequent time slot available for communication.

20 12. The message structure of claim 10, wherein said slot pointer comprises a numerical value indicating a position of said subsequent time slot available for communication relative to a starting point of a time frame.

25 13. In a time division multiple access communication system wherein a base station is capable of communicating with a plurality of user stations, a method of communicating comprising the steps of:

transmitting a first plurality of control traffic messages from a user station to a base station in a first plurality of time slots, at least two of said first plurality of time slots within a single time frame;

30 receiving said first plurality of control traffic messages at said base station;

transmitting a second plurality of control traffic messages from said base station to said user station in a second

plurality of time slots, at least two of said second plurality of time slots within a single time frame; and

receiving said second plurality of control traffic messages at said user station.

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14. The method of claim 13 wherein said step of transmitting said first plurality of control traffic messages comprises the step of spread spectrum encoding said first plurality of control traffic messages, and wherein said step of transmitting said second plurality of control traffic messages comprises the step of spread spectrum encoding said second plurality of control traffic messages.

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15. The method of claim 13 wherein at least one of the control traffic messages in said second plurality of control traffic messages comprises a next slot pointer.

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16. The method of claim 15 wherein said next slot pointer indicates a relative position of a subsequent time slot for transmitting a control traffic message of said first plurality of control traffic messages.

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17. The method of claim 13 wherein said first plurality of control traffic messages and said second plurality of control traffic messages are transmitted over the same frequency band—

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18. In a time division multiple access communication system having a series of time frames each divided into a plurality of time slots, said time slots collectively comprising a plurality of user transmission intervals and a plurality of base transmission intervals, a method of communication comprising the steps of:

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transmitting, over a designated frequency band and in a first base transmission interval, a general poll message from a base station;

receiving said general poll message at a user station;  
5 transmitting in response to said general poll message, over said designated frequency band and in a first user transmission interval, a general response message from said user station to said base station;

10 receiving said general response message at said base station;

transmitting in response to said general response message, over said designated frequency band and in a second base transmission interval, a specific poll message from said base station to said user station; and

15 receiving said specific poll message at said user station;

wherein said general poll message, said general response message, and said specific poll message are all transmitted within the time span of a single time frame.

20 19. The method of claim 18, wherein each time slot is duplex and comprises a user transmission interval followed by a base transmission interval.

25 20. The method of claim 18 wherein said first user transmission interval and said second base transmission interval are located within the same time slot.

30 21. The method of claim 18 further comprising the steps of:

transmitting, over said designated frequency band and in a second user transmission interval, a user control traffic message from said user station to said base station;

receiving said user control traffic message at said base station;

transmitting, over said designated frequency band and in a third base transmission interval, a base control traffic message from said base station to said user station; and

receiving said base control traffic message at said user station.

22. The method of claim 18, wherein:

said general poll message is transmitted in a first time slot;

said general response message is transmitted in a second time slot; and

said general poll message comprises a next slot pointer identifying to the user station a slot position of said second time slot.

23. The method of claim 18 wherein said specific poll message comprises a next slot pointer identifying to the user station a slot position of a subsequent time slot for communication between the base station and the user station.

24. The method of claim 18 wherein said steps of transmitting said general poll message, transmitting said general response message, and transmitting said specific poll message each comprise the step of transmitting a spread spectrum signal.

25. The method of claim 18 further comprising the steps of:

connecting a call from a network to said base station; completing said call from said base station to said user station; and

thereafter exchanging bearer traffic messages between said user station and said base station during said call.

26. A multiple-user communication system, comprising:  
5 a base station, said base station generating a series of time frames, each of said time frames comprising a plurality of time slots; and

a plurality of user stations;

10 wherein said base station transmits control traffic messages during selected ones of said time slots, each control traffic message comprising a next slot pointer identifying a subsequent time slot available for communication; and

15 wherein a user station responding to one of said control traffic messages does so in the time slot identified by the next slot pointer of that control traffic message.

27. The multiple-user communication system of claim 26, wherein each of said time slots comprises a first interval during which a user message may be transmitted by a user station to which the time slot is assigned, and a second interval during  
20 which the base station may transmit a base message.

28. The multiple-user communication system of claim 27 wherein said user message and said base message are each  
25 transmitted in a spread spectrum format.

29. The multiple-user communication system of claim 27 wherein said base message comprises a base header segment, and wherein said next slot pointer is contained within said base  
30 header segment.

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30. In a time division multiple access communication system in which a time frame is divided into a plurality of time slots, a method of communication comprising the steps of:

communicating between a mobile station and a first base station; and

handing off communication from said first base station to a second base station, said step of handing off communication comprising the step of exchanging a plurality of control traffic messages between said mobile station and said second base station during multiple time slots of a single time frame.

31. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of establishing a duplex communication link between said mobile station and said second base station as a result of said step of exchanging said plurality of control traffic messages.

32. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of assigning a time slot for bearer communication to said mobile station as a result of said step of exchanging said plurality of control traffic messages.

33. The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of exchanging bearer traffic messages between said mobile station and said second base station during said time slot assigned for bearer communication.

34. The method of claim 30, wherein said step of exchanging a plurality of control traffic messages between said mobile station and said second base station during multiple time slots of a single time frame comprises the step of transmitting a next slot pointer in each control traffic message transmitted from said second base station to said mobile station.

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